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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 004291

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PNAT](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#) [XL](#)

SUBJECT: SUNNI DEPUTY CITY COUNCIL CHAIRMAN REFLECTS ON

REFERENDUM

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert S. Ford
Reasons 1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) Summary. Immediately after polls closed for the October 15 constitutional referendum, Baghdad City Council Deputy Chairman (and sole Sunni member) Riyadh Nassir Al Adhahd shared his thoughts about the referendum and politics with PolOff. Dr. Riyadh said that perhaps half of the Sunni voters in his district of Al-Adhamiyah had voted "Yes" to the constitution. He said many Sunni in this northern district of Baghdad were also going to support the constitutional referendum but efforts to gain their support probably came too late to cause a more significant impact. Dr. Riyadh told PolOff he saw an opportunity for significant involvement in the new government, especially with the recent concessions on the constitution offered for greater Sunni Arab support. End Summary.

2. (C) Dr. Riyadh is a prominent citizen and local politician from the Al-Adhamiyah District of northern Baghdad. He is currently serving as the Deputy Chairman, and sole Sunni member, of the Baghdad City Council. He is also on Al-Adhamiyah District Council, Vice-President of Iraq's Association of Physicians, and a member of the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP). Dr. Riyadh contacted PolOff five minutes after the polls closed October 15. He said there had been a good turnout of registered voters from the predominately Sunni Adhamiyah District, but he could not predict the outcome of the local vote on the referendum.

3. (C) Dr. Riyadh noted that he had originally opposed the constitution and intended to vote "no". But after the TNA agreed to amendments to the document that would be determined in 2006, he decided to agree with the IIP to support the constitution. IIP support was critical for Dr. Riyadh because it is one of the oldest political parties in Iraq and best represents what he feels are the basic needs and issues of Iraq's Sunni Arabs. Dr. Riyadh was also influenced by the endorsement of the constitution by the Sunni religious leader Sheikh Moyaad of the Abu Hanifa shrine. Though endorsements by the IIP and Sheikh Moyaad were influential, Dr. Riyadh stated that their avowals of support may have been "a little too late" to sway the opinions of the majority of Sunnis. He felt that if their support had been expressed sooner it would have had a greater impact on the electorate. When PolOff asked him about the condemnation of the IIP by other leading Sunni leaders and organizations Dr. Riyadh responded that this situation was really a misunderstanding that could be rectified by Sunni leaders meeting and calmly discussing the issues.

4. (C) Finally, Dr. Riyadh thought the ITG and current Shia leadership must continue their efforts to include Sunni Arabs in the government. He said the ITG needed to meet three basic demands: 1) greater Sunni representation within leading governmental positions; 2) an end to the Ministry of Interior's "harassment" of the Sunni Arab population; and 3) the release of all detained Sunni Arabs. Dr. Riyadh said that unless the ITG met these "crucial, fundamental" conditions, there would be little hope for continued dialogue between the ITG and Sunni Arab leaders.

COMMENT

5. (C) Dr. Riyadh is a well-known and respected leader within local Baghdad community and his opinions are highly regarded. Though somewhat optimistic about the constitution and the future of Sunni involvement in the national government, Dr. Riyadh is still distrustful of the Shia-led ITG. He represents a segment of the Sunni population that is responding to outreach efforts from the ITG but still maintains a basic suspicion of any Shia-led overtures. Khalilzad